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INFO RUEHBD/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 8991
RUEHMC/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1721
RUSBAE/AMEMBASSY NEW DEL 17222
RUEHHR/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 2278
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 4391

F.O. 12865: GDS 6/28/95 (AMSTUTZ, J. BRUCE) OR-M
TAGS: PINT, US, AF
SUBJ: (U) AFGHAN-US RELATIONS: A GESTURE THAT WAS SOTCHED

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. I THINK THE DEPT WOULD BE INTERESTED IN LEARNING OF AN INCIDENT WHEREIN THE DRA ATTEMPTED TO MAKE A GESTURE OF FRIENDSHIP TO THE US BUT MUCKED IT UP.

3. YESTERDAY EVENING AT ABOUT 6:30 PM, MY DOORBELL RANG. WITH MY TIE ASKEW AND COAT OFF, I WENT TO THE DOOR AND TO MY ASTONISHMENT FOUND THERE CABINET MINISTERS SOOMA (HIGHER EDUCATION) AND JALILI (EDUCATION). BEHIND THEM WAS A BODYGUARD WITH A BUMP GUN. I EXPRESSED DELIGHT AT SEEING THEM AND ASKED WHAT I COULD DO FOR THEM. THEY LOOKED AT EACH OTHER AND SAID THEY WERE THERE TO ATTEND OUR NATIONAL DAY! I THANKED THEM BUT POINTED OUT THAT OUR NATIONAL DAY DIDN'T OCCUR UNTIL NEXT WEEK, JULY 4, AND I WAS TEMPTED TO ADD TOO THAT THEY HAD ALSO COME TO THE WRONG PLACE (THE INVITATION INDICATED IT'S BEING HELD AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE). THEY WERE EMBARRASSED AND AFTER CONFERRING RAPIDLY WITH ONE ANOTHER, SAID THAT SOMEONE HAD GOOFED. OUR JULY 4 DATE HAD BEEN CONFUSED WITH "SARATAN 4," THAT DAY'S DATE ON THE AFGHAN CALENDAR. THEY ASKED TO BE EXCUSED, I ESCORTED THEM TO THEIR CAR, AND I SHOOK HANDS MANY TIMES WITH PROFUSE EXPRESSION OF APOLOGIES AND FRIENDSHIP. THEY SAID THEY HOPED TO SEE ME AGAIN NEXT WEEK.

4. COMMENT: I REPORT ALL THIS, NOT TO SHOW THE INEPTNESS OF DRA STAFF WORK (GOD HELP THE POOR AIDE WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS MISTAKE), BUT FOR TWO OTHER REASONS, ONE IS THAT THE DRA PLACES MUCH EMPHASIS AND SIGNIFICANCE ON HOW MANY MINISTERS, AND WHAT MINISTERS, ATTEND NATIONAL DAYS. THAT THEY WOULD SEND TWO HIGHER RANKING MINISTERS, INCLUDING A POLITBUREG MEMBER (SCOPAR) TO OUR NATIONAL DAY, AT A TIME WHEN OUR RELATIONS WERE STRAINED, CAN ONLY MEAN THAT THEY WISHED TO MAKE A PLACATING GESTURE TO US. WHETHER THE DRA WILL NEXT WEEK STILL SEND TWO MINISTERS, AFTER: (A) THEY LEARN BY DIP NOTE TODAY THAT I HAVE BEEN SUMMONED TO WASHINGTON FOR CONSULTATIONS DURING THE JULY 4 WEEK, AND (B) WE PROTEST NEXT WEEK THEIR PICTURING FALSELY US ARMS IN THE CONTROLLED PRESS, IS DOOT.

5. THE OTHER SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF IT IS WHAT IT TELLS US ABOUT DRA'S HANDLING OF AFGHAN-US RELATIONS. TWICE NOW IN THE SPACE OF ABOUT TWO WEEKS, THE DRA HAS MADE (IN THEIR EYES) TWO GESTURES OF FRIENDSHIP: (A) PERMITTING THE AMERICAN-AFGHAN FAMILY OF ERIKA KNISLEY TO ACQUIRE AFGHAN PASSPORTS TO GO TO THE US; AND (B) SENDING YESTERDAY TWO CABINET MINISTERS TO OUR "NATIONAL DAY". THEY MAY FEEL THAT THE US IS DUMB ENOUGH TO BELIEVE THAT THESE ESSENTIALLY UNIMPORTANT GESTURES ARE SIGNIFICANT TO US. I SAY THIS BECAUSE BALANCED AGAINST THESE TWO GESTURES HAVE BEEN THREE OTHER MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT AND CONCURRENT ONES IN MY EYES. THESE HAVE BEEN: THE DELIBERATE ACTION OF SHOWING IN THE DRA PRESS "US WEAPONS" WHICH WERE NOT US-ORIGIN WEAPONS AT ALL, WITH THE CLEAR IMPLICATION THAT THE US WAS SUPPLYING THE INSURGENTS; THE VETOING OF THE SHOWING DOMESTICALLY OF THE ICA-FINANCED (350,000) "WILFRED VALEY FILM, AFTER THIS GOVT SPECIFICALLY AGREED TO IT; AND THE VETOING OF SEVERAL RECENT USAID PARTICIPANT TRANTS JUST WHEN THE TRAINEES WERE ABOUT TO LEAVE FOR THE US.

6. THE IMPRESSION ONE GETS IS THAT THE GOVT IS FOLLOWING A TWO-TRACK POLICY. WHERE IT COUNTS, SUCH AS PROJECTING A CERTAIN IMAGE OF THE US TO ITS PEOPLE OR ALLOWING ITS PEOPLE TO VISIT THE US, THE GOVT IS DETERMINED TO DEPICT AN UNFAVORABLE IMPRESSION AND PREVENT ITS PEOPLE FROM SEEING FOR THEMSELVES WHAT OUR COUNTRY IS LIKE. WHERE IT DOESN'T REALLY COUNT, IN TERMS OF INFLUENCING DOMESTIC PUBLIC OPINION, SUCH AS BY ALLOWING A DUAL NATIONAL FAMILY TO LEAVE AFGHANISTAN, OR BY SENDING TWO MINISTERS TO OUR NATIONAL DAY PARTY, THE GOVT IS FORTHCOMING. I WONDER WHETHER THE GOVT REALLY THINKS WE ARE SO OBTOUSE AS TO OVERLOOK ITS MORE SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS AND PUT GREATER WEIGHT ON THEIR INCONSIDERABLE ONES.

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